

# Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

03 February 2021



**Present:** Anthony Roche (**AR**), Dee Levett (**DL**), Christina Corr (**CC**), Ian Couper (**IC**), Vic Godfrey (**VG**), Emma Jellis (**EJ**), Jo Keshishian (**JK**), Alison Fox (**AF**), Lea Ellis (**LE**), Nicola Viinikka (**NV**), William Stafford (**WS**), Matthew Hepburn (**MH**), Caitlin Bruce (**CB – notes**)

**Circulation:** Global

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## 1. Apologies

Alison Fox, Nicola Viinikka

## 2. Matters Arising

The half day development for staff will take place again in February this will be on 05/02 with the focus being Values and behaviours.

## 3. NHDC update

There will be a national pay bargaining briefing in March, JK to update following this.

The HolidayFlex window is open again – employees can purchase additional annual leave.

04/02 will be “time to talk” day, employees are encouraged to check in with one another and some resources to support this have been added to the intranet.

The next staff briefing will take place on 10/02 and will be largely COVID themed, employees can send questions to Sarah Kingsley before the briefing.

1 employee is being put forward as an NHS volunteer.

Employees who are considered to work in social care are being contacted regarding their first vaccine.

Budgets for 2021/22 will be sent to full council on w/c 08/02.

All employees are encouraged to watch the video in insight with Anthony Roche, Reuben Ayavoo and Georgina Chapman discussing climate change.

#### **4. Employee queries**

Q: Are server updates still ongoing?

A: The server updates are now complete. Employees may find that slow running systems could be caused by national issues with telecommunications which have been ongoing through the lockdown.

Q: Could a message to go councillors regarding these national issues?

A: **VG to send.**

Q: Is there anything that can be done around professionalism during zoom calls, it has been noticed that some employees may be swearing more.

A: Tolerance towards things like emotive language are different to different people, as the lines between home life and work life become increasingly blurred people may feel their usual levels of professionalism slip somewhat.

It can also be said that when people are more stressed worse language may be used so this may be a good opportunity to check in with colleagues more often to see how they are doing.

Q: Would it be possible to add homeworking and especially homeworking during a pandemic to the employee user guide?

A: The handbook is updated periodically so this will be looked at. There is currently a lockdown toolkit on the intranet: <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-support-staff-and-managers>

The virtual kitchen organised by Helen Bylett in January was praised. Another virtual kitchen will be held on 25/02 at 10am.

Knit and Natter will continue to be held on a Monday, there is also a potential book club being started so look out for more information to follow on that.

Q: would further advice on the work from home expenses/ tax relief be available in any way?

A: We are unable to give tax advice however the link to the Gov.uk site is: <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees>

#### **5. IT Update**

The proposal to purchase laptops for staff has now been approved by full council. There are currently no laptops available from Dell due to demand at the moment so this could cause a delay in rolling this out.

The server migration is now complete. Please report any speed issues to the IT helpdesk. Speed issues could be internal or issues with users own broadband, the latter IT will not be able to assist with.

Work on the version 4 council chamber layout is set to begin in March. The new layout is more practical diamond shape.

#### **6. Building Services Update**

Compliance checks are continuing in District Council Offices.

Signage has gone up in the DCO and other buildings to wear face coverings when not seated.

## 7. AOB

Question: What is the current status of the Active Communities restructure?

Answer: Formal consultation on the Active Communities restructure closed on 13/01/2021 and the proposed structure will take effect from 31/03/2021

Question: Do any changes to access need to be made to the SCF inbox.

Answer: Not currently, although it would be useful to have an automated response as this is checked weekly.

**Chair for next meeting – Mathew Hepburn**

## Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

Issues relating to property e.g. broken lift, non-flushing toilets, etc. must always be reported to Property Services in the first instance: [propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk)

Alternatively you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - [SCF@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:SCF@north-herts.gov.uk)

### **Representatives (and extension):**

**Lea Ellis #4830** - Community Engagement team based on Floor 3

**Emma Jellis #4312** - MSU team based on Floor 4

**Allison Fox #4203** - Technical Support Officer based on Floor 3

**Christina Corr #4325** - Senior Technical Officer R&B team based on Floor 5

**Nicola Viinikka** Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

**William Stafford #4151** - Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

**Matthew Hepburn #4311** - Member, Committee & Scrutiny Officer

**Andrew Betts #4282** - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford